



MEDIA RELEASE

12 December 2012

INQUIRY INTO MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

The Parliament of Victoria Road Safety Committee today tabled its report in relation to the *Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety*. The report covers a range of issues including data collection, trends in motorcycle usage, the attitudes of motorcyclists and drivers towards each other, off-road rider safety and countermeasures and new initiatives which may improve the safety of motorcyclists.

In relation to data, Mr Murray Thompson MP, Chair of the Road Safety Committee and Member for Sandringham, pointed to one of the key findings of the report which states 'there are serious and ongoing issues with the collection, use and dissemination of motorcycle trauma data in Victoria. The cumulative effect of these issues is that they undermine informed decision making on road safety for motorcyclists, and therefore it is not possible to accurately assess motorcycle trauma in Victoria.'

The importance placed on data collection by the Committee was evidenced by its first recommendation, which called for an independent office of road safety data to be established.

The Committee has also recommended that an in-depth study on motorcycle accidents be undertaken to provide an evidence base for future policy initiatives.

The loss of any life through a motorcycle accident is a tragedy. The Committee notes that motorcycle fatalities have generally stayed between 43 to 49 deaths annually since 2005, a significant improvement on the 64 fatalities recorded in 2001. As at the 12th of December 2012, Victoria's motorcycle road toll stands at four fewer than at this time last year. Mr Thompson commented that 'the reduction reflects the work of countless road safety professionals, experts, motorcyclists, community members and government.'

The Committee found there has been a 70% increase in the number of registered motorcycles from 2001 to 2011, and a 37% increase in licensees between 2002 and 2010. Mr Thompson highlighted that the increase in usage has both positive and negative road safety implications. Increases in the number of motorcyclists and registered motorcycles may possibly result in greater trauma risks. Alternatively such increases may raise the profile of motorcyclists on the road, thus improving the awareness of other road users of motorcyclists and assisting in reducing motorcyclists' trauma.

The Committee was pleased to note that the attitudes of riders and drivers towards each other appear to be improving. However the Committee was keen to emphasise that there needs to be a greater focus on the concept of shared responsibility to continue to improve attitudes. This greater focus could be achieved by the introduction of a 'Motorcycle Safety Awareness Week' in Victoria.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry required the Committee to investigate responsibilities for improving the safety of off-road riders.

The Committee believes that whilst the relevant legislation clearly imposes responsibilities on Victorian road safety agencies, these responsibilities have been accepted to varying degrees: Victoria Police has met some of its responsibilities, but in an ad hoc manner; the Transport Accident Commission has begun off-road safety initiatives, but these are strictly limited; and lastly, VicRoads has not met its legislative responsibilities. The Committee commends the Department of Sustainability and Environment for its activities in relation to off-road riding, despite having no legislative road safety responsibilities.

The Committee heard significant commentary on the relationship between road safety agencies and motorcycle stakeholders. In short, agencies are not meeting the expectations of the motorcycling community. Whilst the Committee has suggested ways in which agencies can work towards improving this relationship, it also noted there is an onus on motorcycle stakeholders to be better organised amongst themselves and to work more effectively within existing structures to advance their issues.

Whilst not recommending that protective gear for motorcyclists be mandatory, the Committee recognises that protective gear has important and proven injury reduction benefits. The Committee has called for more work to be undertaken to develop a star rating system to allow motorcyclists what one participant termed an 'educated freedom of choice'. Mandating the use of protective gear which may not meet basic performance requirements was not considered appropriate.

The Committee has called for more work to be undertaken around the issue of filtering. Whilst filtering, as distinct from lane splitting, may have potential safety benefits, there is limited research available on both the benefits and risks, and the term itself is subject to varying definitions. The Committee has recommended work be undertaken by an expert group, comprised of government agencies, academics and motorcycle stakeholders, to investigate the risks and benefits of filtering, with a view to making it a legal practice in Victoria.

The funding of road safety, particularly in relation to motorcycle safety initiatives, was investigated. The Committee has recommended that the motorcycle safety levy be abolished, and that funds derived from enforcement practices, such as speed and red light cameras, be transferred into a specific road safety fund and only used to supplement existing road safety funding. The Committee believes this approach will ensure Victorian road safety funding follows best practice, ensures targeted investment in improved infrastructure and road safety countermeasures and eliminates an inequitable financial burden currently placed on motorcycle riders.

In completing the report, the Committee received 76 written submissions from a wide range of stakeholders including individuals, government agencies, rider groups, health professionals and motorcycle representative groups. During the course of the Inquiry, the Committee received evidence from over 100 witnesses in both Melbourne and locations throughout regional Victoria. The Committee also met with a number of international motorcycle safety experts.

For a copy of the report, please see <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/rsc/inquiries/article/1409>.

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